MORE THAN A MIRROR TO THE PAST

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MORE THAN A MIRROR TO THE PAST

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THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

BY Albert K. Baragwanath, SENIOR CURATOR

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MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Avenue at 103rd Street
New York, New York, 10029

1973

THE FOUNDING YEARS: 1923-1932

Although I. N. Phelps Stokes in his monumental six-volume history of Manhattan Island begins the account with Plato's mention of Atlantis in 500 B.C., a good date for the beginning of the story of the Museum of the City of New York might be 1880, the year the Musée Carnavalet was established. For it was this museum of the history of Paris which acted as a stimulus to a small group of men to organize in 1923 a museum for New York's history. No major American city had a museum of its history by that date.

Spearheaded by Henry Collins Brown, author of a number of books on New York, a certificate of incorporation was drawn up listing the objectives of the Museum, among which was included: "To do all things necessary, fit or suitable to create a love for and interest in all things pertaining to the City of New York." Five trustees were named in this document of July 17, 1923: Henry Collins Brown, Sturges S. Dunham, Guy Emerson, Harrison W. Gebhardt, and Thomas B. Gilchrist. On the 21st of July this document was filed with the State of New York and the Museum was duly incorporated. It was perhaps fitting that the Secretary of State signing the certificate of incorporation was named James A. Hamilton.

By agreement with the Commissioner of Parks, Gracie Mansion was made available to the Museum. This late eighteenth century historic house had been taken over by the city in 1891 in connection with the creating of Carl Schurz Park.

In November the number of trustees was increased from five to twenty and among the new persons elected was James Speyer, who was the Museum's most influential trustee until his death in 1941. Mr. Brown was appointed the Museum's Director at a salary of $150.00 a week.

Thus the Museum now had a home, a director and an active board of trustees, but progress was slow and discouraging: Gracie Mansion was inadequate both in condition and size and the Museum had difficulty in gaining the support needed by the general public. The city responded to the problems of Gracie Mansion by making $15,000 available for full restoration, but the trustees soon realized that this building would never be entirely satisfactory if the institution were to prosper as hoped. A search for a new site soon was under way.

By 1926 it was decided that a professionally trained director and a staff should be engaged and a major exhibition outside Gracie Mansion should be mounted. Thus, Hardinge Scholle was appointed Director in place of Mr. Brown and an exhibition entitled "Old New York" was scheduled for fall opening at the Fine Arts Building on West 57th Street.

When Mr. Scholle retired twenty-five years later, he wrote of his coming to the Museum: "In those days the general interest in Americana was just beginning and museums of local history were few. I came recommended by Edward Robinson, then Director of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and an enthusiastic believer in our scheme, and upon arrival was informed by the then dominating personality of our board, James Speyer, that my immediate task was the organization of a great loan exhibition illustrating the story of New York, to open in the autumn. . . . Such an undertaking, to put it mildly, was frightening and indeed could never have been accomplished without the help and knowledge of Charles O. Cornelius, Curator of the American Wing at the Metropolitan and a close friend. . . . V. Isabelle Miller came to us from The Metropolitan Museum as our other staff member at that time. My father induced his old friend, William D. Seymour, the distinguished theatrical producer and collector of theatre memorabilia, to help with the history of the New York stage. He, in turn, delegated the job to his daughter, May Davenport Seymour, who shortly after joined our staff. The show, entitled nostalgically, 'Old New York,' was a great success with an attendance of 18,928 during its nine days duration." (It is remarkable to note that both Miss Miller and Miss Seymour retired in 1963 after serving the Museum for 37 years each!)

Plans for a new building began immediately after this. There had been some attempt by the board to persuade the city to make a site available at the southeast corner of Washington Square and Thompson Street—Mr. Speyer even purchased some property there to encourage the proposition, but the city declined. Instead, land on Fifth Avenue between 103rd and 104th Streets was offered provided the trustees could raise two million dollars through voluntary contributions by June of 1928, $1,000,000 for the new building and $1,000,000 for a permanent endowment fund. To set the proper pace, Mr. Speyer donated $450,000. Two other donors of the largest gifts were John D. Rockefeller, Jr. who contributed $450,000 and Edward S. Harkness who gave $300,000. But, significantly, 1,326 other New Yorkers joined them, giving sums from $1.00 up for a final total of $2,018,000. It was, of course, anticipated that once sufficient funds had been raised for the new building, continued contributions would be made for a permanent endowment. However, after the financial crash in October of 1929 there was naturally a sudden diminution of contributions. The loss of financial "momentum" for the Museum—particularly at such an opportune time as the opening of the new building—was a most serious blow for the future financial health of the institution.

A limited competition for the new building on Fifth Avenue was held among the following New York architects: Delano & Aldrich, Grosvenor Atterbury, Joseph H. Freedlander, Helmle Corbett & Harrison, and Benjamin Morris. Joseph H. Freedlander's designs for a five-story building in modern adaptation of Georgian Colonial architecture were selected.

On April 30, 1929, on the one hundred and fortieth anniversary of the inauguration of George Washington, Mayor James J. Walker laid the cornerstone with these opening words: "I expect to make a more substantial contribution to these ceremonies than I can hope to make by the utterance of any words. I expect to come here and do a sort of practical thing, with the aid of a brand-new trowel. But I am amongst those who are delighted upon this occasion that we can now see the Museum of the City of New York as a fact." Other speakers included former Governor

Alfred E. Smith, Dr. John D. Finley, and George W. Wickersham, former Attorney General of the United States, who mentioned: "This is the first Museum in the United States to visualize the history and development of an American city, and it is the first Museum built anywhere solely by voluntary subscriptions." The quotation attributed to Lincoln:

> I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives.
> I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him.

was read. This motto, which later was engraved in marble in the main hall of the Museum, was a favorite of James Speyer, who claimed to be a scholar of Lincolniana. Although a fine sentiment, no one seems to have asked Mr. Speyer as to its source and no one, in spite of much research, has been able to unearth it in the writings of Lincoln.

Building progressed with few difficulties and the finished edifice was opened for inspection on December 17, 1930. Its beautiful Georgian style entrance with its graceful marble pillars, its fine red brick with marble trim and quoins, its elegant hanging staircase of marble in the main hall, and its many rich appointments—all were highly praised. However, as installation began of the Museum's limited collections on the first and second floors, it was soon realized that the brick interior walls, marble floors, non-built-in lighting fixtures, etc. did not lend themselves for ease of installation.

The new building and resultant publicity greatly increased the number of gifts offered. Unquestionably, the outstanding gift of this early period was the J. Clarence Davies Collection, which numbered about fifteen thousand items, including prints, paintings, photographs, theatre memorabilia, books on New York, and so forth. Grace M. Mayer, who joined the staff in 1930, exhibited the finest views from this collection, integrating them with the sixteen dioramas or historical miniature groups created by Dwight Franklin and Ned J. Burns. These groups have since become the objects probably best remembered by visitors. In their recreation of history they depicted such events or scenes as Indian

life on Manhattan, Henry Hudson's exploration, the purchase of Manhattan Island, the surrender of New Amsterdam, the trial of Nathan Hale, the inauguration of Washington, etc. The model, by Charles Capehart, of New Amsterdam as it looked in 1660 has remained from its first installation the focal point of the Museum's material on Dutch life.

Miss Miller already had costumes and fine New York silver for exhibition on the second floor; Miss Seymour exhibited theatre memorabilia in a special room on that floor. A gallery devoted to Alexander Hamilton was created with material lent by the Hamilton family. Some few pieces of fire fighting equipment and some military objects were also displayed.

On the south end of the second floor was the nucleus of today's marine gallery. These items, however, did not belong to the Museum of the City of New York but to the Marine Museum of the City of New York which was offered gallery space in the new building. This museum, which was founded by the Ship Model Society, was incorporated in 1928 with its own board of trustees. This arrangement continued until 1953 when it was decided by both institutions that it would be advantageous "for these governing bodies to be made identical." The principal merit of this arrangement, aside from ease of management, is the ability to integrate the collections of the two institutions.

James Speyer gave the unusual full-length portrait of Washington by Gilbert Stuart for the opening, and Mrs. Frederic Grosvenor Goodridge donated the John Wollaston portraits of Philip Philipse and his wife Margaret together with her mother and father, Mary and Nathaniel Marston. These four colonial portraits, still the finest group in the Museum's collection, were immediately installed on the second floor over the stairwell where they have remained with few interruptions.

Thus, the new building was ready for its grand opening on Monday, January 11, 1932—a date coinciding with the anniversary of Alexander Hamilton's birth. This opening celebration was attended by 4,386 persons and the mood was one of great optimism. The Museum of the City of New York was now a full-blown reality, taking its place with

the other great cultural institutions of the city. One particularly auspicious omen was concerned with the opening: the following morning, when the maintenance crew was cleaning the marble floors, a single set of footprints was found, together with matching marks which might have been made by a peg-leg. Many still believe the ghost of Peter Stuyvesant gave his approval to the new building; cynics speak of a mop handle.

THE EXPANDING YEARS: 1932-1959

The growth of the Museum during the twenty-seven years after the opening of the Fifth Avenue building was remarkable. This was particularly reflected in the size of the staff, the collections, the budget and the special exhibition schedule. Comparing the year 1932 with 1959, these startling figures emerge: staff (excluding guard and maintenance force)—fourteen as compared to thirty-five; expenditures—$176,614 against $350,737. It is a reasonable estimate that 60,000 gifts were added to the collections during this period, many including hundreds of items each.

Gifts ranged in size from a peppercorn, reputedly used to pay the rent on Bowling Green, to a 10½ foot zinc statue of Robert Fulton which weighs about two tons. Objects differed in value from that of a post-card of a New York view to the Atheneum-type portrait of Washington—considered the finest replica Gilbert Stuart made, a gift by John Morgan Hill in 1946.

How can one begin to touch upon the great treasures of New York history that came to the Museum during these years? How does one compare such gifts as Eugene O'Neill's handwritten manuscripts for 11 plays or the bequest of Mr. and Mrs. J. Insley Blair of 18 superb paintings of views of New York or 10,000 photographs of the whole spectrum of New York life from about 1885 to 1930 given by the photographer, Percy C. Byron, or 27 of the finest pieces of furniture by New York cabinetmakers given by Mrs. Screven Lorillard, or 200,000 theatre playbills, programs, etc., or a complete room with Duncan Phyfe furniture given by Mrs. Harry Horton Benkard, or 412 original glass negatives taken by Jacob A. Riis and given by his son, or a Revolutionary War officer's uniform of which there are only two others

known, a gift of Henry L. Rutherfurd, or the Carrie Walter Stettheimer dolls' house containing original miniature works by such artists as Marcel Duchamp, Gaston Lachaise and William Zorach, or a man's suit worn to Washington's Inaugural Ball, donated by E. Coster Wilmerding.

With the steady influx of gifts the full exhibition area of the building was gradually installed: the Communications Gallery was completed in 1933, the Stock Exchange Gallery was created in 1938, the Toy Gallery in 1943, and the 1905 drawing-room from the Park Avenue residence of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Harkness Flagler installed in 1949, the last of the six New York interiors in the Costume Gallery. These alcoves are perhaps the most significant of the Museum's permanent exhibitions, beginning with a room in the Dutch tradition of about 1700; an English Colonial parlor of about 1770; a bedroom of the mid-eighteenth century, given in memory of Mrs. Harry Horton Benkard; the 1830 drawing-room from the residence of Stephen Whitney on Bowling Green, given by the Whitney family; the Henry Evelyn Pierrepont drawing-room from Pierrepont Place, Brooklyn, about 1856; and, finally, the aforementioned Flagler room. Two other outstanding rooms installed in 1939 are the bedroom and dressing-room from the John D. Rockefeller, Sr. home on West 54th Street, about 1880, given by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

In the period between 1932 and 1959 the Museum held approximately 320 special exhibitions, thus averaging about twelve each year. These varied from large to small and serious to light. A few titles suggest the breadth: "Dining in Old New York," "Silver by New York Makers," "Coney Island—Playground of the World," "Furniture by New York Cabinetmakers, 1650 to 1860," "The New Yorker Travels," "Currier & Ives: Printmakers to the American People" (this exhibition featured 350 of the finest Currier & Ives lithographs from the great collection of about 3,000 prints assembled by Harry T. Peters and given to the Museum by his family at that time), "Those Elegant New Yorkers—250 Years of Fashion," "Parade of Dolls," and "A Pageant of the Opera." One special exhibition, "New York Street Scenes, 1852," is worth particular mention. Not only was this one of the most popular exhibitions the Museum had

ever put on by 1952 (attendance rose by 29% during that year), but also its structuring was markedly different. Until that time most exhibits had been assembled by a specific curator with guidance and approval of the director and often some assistance from other members of the staff or volunteer helpers. In the 1852 Street Scene the entire exhibition was under the control of one person, Ralph R. Miller, then Assistant Director, and all members of the curatorial staff were assigned areas of responsibility—even the Director, John Walden Myer, took over the construction of a pawn shop, for instance. Another radical technique for that time was the use of sound: a tape was made with the assistance of the American Theatre Wing, giving forth not only mid-nineteenth century street sounds but also a series of the many street cries of the time. For a number of years after the close of the exhibition visitors would ask where the "street cries" were. Mr. Miller further extended sensory impact of the exhibition by including smells, such as the aroma of oakum in the ship chandler shop and witch-hazel in the barber shop.

John Walden Myer in the 1954–55 Annual Report writes of the role of special exhibitions: "Special exhibitions which attract new visitors and bring back old friends measure, to some extent, the vitality of a museum. These temporary displays make it possible to illustrate an historic episode, a single aspect of New York, or a whole period of the city's life with a thoroughness which the limitations of space would prohibit on a permanent basis. For a special exhibition, seldom shown pieces from the Museum's own collections are brought forth, items are borrowed from other institutions and individuals, and objects are moved from their more or less permanent locations to the temporary gallery where they are reinstalled in order that they may do their part in depicting the chosen theme. The selection of a subject, the choosing of material, and the design of the display for a special exhibition are problems which haunt every curator. Only when all three problems are solved to a perfection which pleases and interests the scholarly authority and the casual visitor alike can the show be deemed a complete success."

Probably the single most important event in the progress of the Museum was the establishment of an Education Department in 1932,

made possible by a generous contribution from the Carnegie Corporation. The work of this department, under the supervision of Frank A. Rexford for the first four years, developed the whole concept of the school classes coming to the Museum by bus and being given specific tours through the galleries. The continued success of this program is demonstrated by the number of persons one meets in the city who first visited the Museum with his school class—so much so, in fact, that it has often been difficult to dispel the image of a museum for children only. The Education Department also inaugurated lectures, story-tellings, concerts, film showings, traveling school exhibits, puppet shows, and workshops. As with other departments during this period, it is interesting to note the length of staff tenure: from 1935 to 1948 Aileen G. Barlow was Supervisor and the following ten years Janet Pinney was departmental head. It was while Miss Pinney was Supervisor that the unique "Please Touch" program was created in 1955 by her assistant, Susan E. Lyman, with the financial assistance and volunteer aid of the Museum Committee of the Junior League. This program, inspired in reverse by the ubiquitous "Please Do Not Touch" so unsympathetic to young museum visitors, utilized a reconstructed New Amsterdam room equipped with seventeenth century household articles, as well as manikins dressed in reproductions of the contemporary costumes. After an introductory chat, the members of specific school classes are encouraged to handle the various objects and to ask questions about them. This plan has continued to be very successful and has now increased to include three separate "Please Touch" areas.

One unusual interval during these years was the era of the "Works Project Administration of the Federal Works Agency" from 1934 to about 1941. There were times when there were as many as sixty extra persons working in the Museum. The varying talents of these artisans were employed in all phases of the Museum's expanding exhibitions and activities. The procedure of documenting all gifts by photographs and posting the location of all objects in the Museum on the registrar's cards were particularly valuable. Both these endeavors were discontinued

with the advent of the war and never resumed fully due to the backlog that had been created and the expense involved.

Another victim of the war was the *Museum of the City of New York Bulletin*. This was first begun in 1937 and featured primarily articles by the staff on special exhibitions, noteworthy new gifts, and on various aspects of New York history. The last issue, Volume V, no. 6, was published in June 1942. The *Bulletin* was revived in a more popular form by Joseph Veach Noble shortly after he became Director in 1970.

Two other publishing events during the period were significant. In 1953, after three years of research, Professor John A. Kouwenhoven completed the superb study entitled *The Columbia Historical Portrait of New York*, honoring Columbia University's three hundredth year. Termed an essay in graphic history, the work contained about 900 illustrations documenting New York's history from Dutch times, 425 of which were from the Museum's collection. The other prime literary achievement was the book *Once upon a City* by Grace M. Mayer, Curator of Prints from 1932 until 1959. The latter, published by Macmillan in 1958, recaptured the charm of the city from 1890 to 1910, with a selection from the Museum's great collection of photographs by Percy C. Byron. A special exhibition of Byron photographs in connection with the publication of the book proved to be the most popular photographic exhibit ever held at the Museum.

As has been indicated, there was a minimum of staff turnover during the twenty-eight years from 1932 through 1958, with Hardinge Scholle as Director until 1951 and John Walden Myer for the remaining seven years, the latter having been Assistant Director for eighteen years previous to that. In like manner, there were only five different Presidents of the Board of Trustees during the period: Phoenix Ingraham (President from 1923 to 1934), Courtlandt Nicoll, Beverley R. Robinson, John Sloane, and Peter S. Paine. James Speyer, however, continued to be the most powerful guiding force of the Museum until his death in 1941, not only in forming policy but in actual supervision of the daily working of the institution. In the latter role perhaps he extended himself a bit too

far. It is reported that he used to stand by the front door to check on the promptness of the staff's arrival. One day when Jack Myer was a few minutes late, Mr. Speyer tried to make his point by asking, "What time is it, Mr. Myer?" To which was answered, "Plenty of time, Mr. Speyer."

In 1951 a significant event occurred on the board. John Sloane reports on it in the Annual Report for that year: "For the first time in the Museum's history, women have been elected to the Board of Trustees—Mrs. Henderson Robb and Mrs. Reginald P. Rose, who served so faithfully as officers on our Women's Committee, are the new members. With their advice and cooperation we are realigning the functions of the Women's Committee to make their work of even more value than heretofore." Actually, the prophecy of the last sentence did not transpire. Perhaps now that women were fully represented on the board the advisory capacity of the Women's Committee was less needed. In any event, this formerly very active group, which had been chairmanned by Mrs. H. Casimir de Rham from 1927 until her death in 1946, faded from the scene a few years later.

When Mr. Myer to the sadness of the staff retired at the end of 1958, he wrote in the Annual Report: "I am fortunate indeed to be able to leave the Museum of the City of New York (which now seems to be part of me) to their [the staff's] competent and devoted care and am confident that they, under the guidance of Mr. Toole, its new Director, will achieve for it a brilliant future—a future worthy of our great metropolis."

THE CHANGING YEARS: 1959-1970

When the trustees, after a considerable number of months of search, selected Dr. K. Ross Toole, who had been Director of the Montana Historical Society for seven years, it was clear that they were intent on development along new lines. Although it seemed evident that the institution had the respect of scholars and was pleasing to the more cultured visitors, its overall attendance was not rising at a rate comparable to other museums. Further, the arrangement of galleries, attractive as they were, did not offer any clearly organized pattern for unfolding the history of the city. Therefore, the task Dr. Toole set for himself in the beginning of 1959 was the writing of a proposal for the entire rehabilitation of all the galleries so that the visitor would progress from earliest Dutch times through the centuries to the present—an aspect of the city that had been almost totally ignored. The plan was carefully prepared and well regarded for its fundamental concepts, but the problem of implementation was something else: by June 1959 the operating expenses of the Museum had reached an all-time high of over $317,000 with a deficit of more than $33,000 and thus funds were not readily available.

During the fifteen months Dr. Toole remained Director a number of changes took place: a professional exhibits designer in the person of Lino S. Lipinsky de Orlov was added to the staff, salaries for a very underpaid staff were increased markedly in spite of the Museum's financial plight, a greatly enlarged Museum Sales Shop was created, and the publication of a children's magazine called *Our Town* was begun. The servicing of requests for copy photographs of objects from the collection was made into a separate entity with Henriette Beal in charge, operating under the general supervision of the Print Department. The

establishment of this office proved very practical and it is interesting to note that in the fiscal year 1960–61 $4,123 was taken in whereas in the year 1971–72 $20,024 was received.

Grace M. Mayer, in disagreement with some of Dr. Toole's policies, resigned in May 1959 after twenty-nine years with the Museum. Since 1932 Miss Mayer as Print Curator had assembled the finest and largest collections of views of the city. Albert K. Baragwanath, Librarian since 1952, was appointed Curator of this collection.

In May 1959 the guard and maintenance staff organized a union and were granted a charter by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Local 1665.

The most important special exhibition held in 1959 was "The Roaring Twenties." An interesting innovation in connection with this was the gala costumed dance which was not only a great success in itself but also raised moderate funds. The President, Peter S. Paine, wrote of it: "The preview for this exhibit was the major social event of the Museum winter. Over 1600 members and their guests, many dressed to match the era, were entertained in a reasonably accurate setting of speakeasies, dances, Charleston demonstrations and floor shows of the Twenties, historical detail even going so far as a Stutz Bearcat and a vintage Pierce Arrow . . . parked at our Fifth Avenue entrance." One aspect of this exhibition became quite evident: in spite of the fact that the Museum was founded in 1923, almost every object for a 1920's show except for costumes had to be obtained outside of the Museum's collections!

With Dr. Toole's resignation in the beginning of 1960 (his free style cultivated in the open spaces of Montana ran slightly afoul of the Museum's more conservative trustees) yet a new phase of the Museum's development was begun: Ralph R. Miller, who had been Assistant Director since 1951, was appointed Director; the board elected a new President, Dudley P. K. Wood; many committees were established to study all phases of the Museum's operation, but the 1960 deficit for the year of $88,000 was uppermost in the minds of all.

Of the self-analyses that took place, the study of the collections proved to be the most illuminating. In the Decorative Arts, Portrait, and

Print Collections a surprising identical bell curve evolved from the graphing of the dates: the 17th and 18th centuries were relatively weak; the 19th century was exceptionally strong, peaking in the 1825 to 1850 period; and, finally, the 20th century, after about 1910, was startlingly empty. The cause for the condition reflected in the early centuries was obviously due to the scarcity of fine material, but the 20th century was attributable directly to the fact that the Museum had never had a policy of collecting the present or recent past! In answer to Mr. Miller's request to the staff to begin collecting the present, Sam Pearce, Curator of the Theatre Collection, purchased a Beatle's wig, appropriate tie and button, and dressed them on a manikin head which was then placed prominently in the director's office.

Factors other than the date-spread of objects were also brought to light. For instance, in many areas there was much unnecessary duplication and unevenness of quality. With storage facilities critically overtaxed, together with the other considerations, a new and more stringent collection policy was introduced.

An innovation that proved immediately popular and financially rewarding was the establishing in 1960 of the Sunday Walking Tours under the guidance of Henry Hope Reed, Jr., noted architectural historian. The Annual Report of that year wrote of these: "One of the most unexpectedly successful new programs of the Museum is the series of Sunday Walking Tours, introduced on a trial basis last April. Here the Museum took advantage of an opportunity that few other institutions could equal: on permanent public display, in what is without doubt the largest and liveliest exhibition in the world, is the city itself."

During this period the Museum carried on its usual schedule of special exhibitions but there was increasingly a tendency toward larger and more complex installations. Notable in this vein, was the one entitled "New York—the Scene, 67/17," which occupied the main hall and most of the second floor. Comparing life in New York for the two widely different years allowed for interesting contrasts and the opportunity to exhibit the "mod" world of 1967 in all its colorfulness. Even such a lowly item as an ivory toothpick of '17 vintage was shown with the latest

"Water-Pik." Platforms, repeating panels, decorated ceilings, psychedelic lighting all had their place. The director spoke of the exhibition as "an extension of the Museum's new philosophy, *total museology*." He continued: "'New York—the Scene' invited the visitor to use more than just visual sense to achieve a total museum experience. It was a contemporary exhibit placed in a framework of historical relationship, designed to communicate both physically and perceptually with the visitor."

The second floor was also the location for the largest theatre exhibition ever presented by the Museum: "On Stage, 1913–1963," honoring fifty years of Actors' Equity Association. It was also May Davenport Seymour's last exhibition before her retirement after thirty-seven years as Curator of the unique Theatre Collection. Sam Pearce followed as Curator and was instrumental in creating the organization, Friends of the Theatre and Music Collection, in 1966. The first exhibition sponsored by this group was "Musicals of the 1930's." One of the most important exhibitions in the decorative arts field was "New York Silversmiths of the Seventeenth Century," which supplemented the Museum's superb collection with fine loan pieces. This was V. Isabelle Miller's last major exhibit before retiring in 1963—also after thirty-seven years. Her assistant, Margaret Stearns, became the Curator of the department.

The exhibition "Peter Cooper's New York—Street Scene of 1860" is principally remembered for the costume ball held in association with the opening on November 1, 1960. Not only was this a huge success socially but it also netted the Museum almost $30,000.

A marked departure from usual activities occurred when the Museum co-sponsored with the New York State Council on the Arts a two-day seminar with the unlikely title of *Ways, Means and Values of Museum Communication with the Viewing Public*. Over 100 directors and key personnel from museums all over the country participated in this meeting, which was moderated by Marshall McLuhan and Harley Parker; Professor Jacques Barzun delivered the closing address at the banquet that terminated the seminar in rather strong disagreement with many of the opinions expressed by Mr. McLuhan. His closing words were:

". . . the alphabet, we must remember, was invented by illiterates." A transcript of the entire seminar was published by the Museum.

An important development in the handling of the ever-increasing number of school classes coming to the Museum occurred with the establishment, in 1964, of the Museum Service Guild. This group of volunteers, usually numbering about seventy-five each year, are trained by the Education Department to give the "Please Touch" demonstrations and conduct the scheduled classes through the galleries, explaining and interpreting the exhibits. The routes taken by the classes are preplanned to reduce congestion as much as possible.

When Mr. Miller took over the directorship from Dr. Toole, he continued to develop the idea of a logical sequence of permanent historical galleries throughout the Museum. The space available and the limitation of the architectural arrangement of the building suggested more strongly than ever that the solution lay in the construction of a new wing off the south end of the first floor. The tentative plan would thus be to have the Dutch Gallery on the north end of the first floor and the Colonial, Revolutionary War, and Federal Galleries in two wings on the south end. Lack of funds prevented the onset of construction but the Director organized the entire curatorial staff towards the realization of the Dutch Gallery. More than two years were spent on research and on augmenting the Museum's collection of Dutch Colonial artifacts.

This permanent gallery devoted to the important years of Dutch settlement on Manhattan was the most complex assignment the staff had ever tackled. An example of the scope of the gallery is the fact that there are about 2,500 words explaining the exhibits. The focal point of the visual material is a 360-degree cyclorama extending above the gallery which delineates New Amsterdam in 1661. Probably no museum has created an exhibit of greater depth to cover a period of about 40 years of history.

The period from 1959 to 1970 was an important one for the Museum; after an initial phase of self-doubt the institution moved forward with important exhibitions, both permanent and temporary. However, two

areas still plagued: a continuing financial deficit and the feeling, in spite of all efforts, that the Museum was still not reflecting the full temper of the times. Louis Auchincloss, distinguished author and lawyer, who had been elected President in 1966, saw the importance of the Museum for the man of today in this interesting statement: "Perhaps it is time to speak up about the important role of history museums. To me one of the dimensions of life is missing in any human being who knows nothing of the history of the area in which he lives. The man who resides in Manhattan and has a comprehensive knowledge of American history and culture, but who is entirely ignorant of the Dutch and English periods of his island, who knows nothing of New York in the Revolution, the Civil War, World War I, strikes me as having an arid corner in the garden of his intellect."

When Ralph Miller decided to devote himself entirely to painting and thus retired in June of 1970, a new era was launched.

THE RECENT YEARS: 1970-1973

On June 12, 1970 *The New York Times* carried the surprising news that "Joseph V. Noble, Vice Director for Administration at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, has resigned his post to become the Director of the Museum of the City of New York. He will start his new job September 1. . . . His election, announced yesterday by Louis Auchincloss, President of the board, has provided trustees with 'one of the most exciting moments of our first half century,' Mr. Auchincloss said."

Plans were immediately put into effect to begin the reshaping of the Museum's total image and to raise substantial funds for expansion and elimination of the Museum's nagging deficit. Mr. Auchincloss announced the formation of the President's Council from among "the principal business and cultural leaders of the city." A major fund-raising campaign was initiated with the goal of raising an endowment in five years totaling $6,300,000 for "the maintenance and improvement of our collections, for special shows and for adapting our institution to the better service of the public." Announcement was also made of plans for a new six-story storage-service-office building in the space at the rear of the Museum. Through the use of this addition, a floor and a half of the main building can be recaptured and returned for exhibition use. Architectural designs are currently being completed. With a staff of 70 and an operating budget of $800,000 the Museum had reached the status of a major national institution.

However, one of Mr. Noble's first priorities was to make the Museum more relevant to the community. Pursuant to this idea, he brought Mrs. Marcella Maingot to the staff as head of a community relations department. Further, he decided to create an exhibition on a subject that no

other museum at that time had dared to touch: a study of drug use in the city. Entitled "Drug Scene," the finished exhibition had a tremendous impact on the public and the press. Among the more than thirteen feature articles which appeared in the newspapers, the following quotations indicate the response: "'Drug Scene,' at the Museum of the City of New York . . . is a spare, bare and uncompromising demonstration of what ought to be—but clearly is not—the obvious. Conceived and directed by Joseph Veach Noble, the Museum's new Director, the show pulls no punches; e.g., it includes the older generation's pep and sleeping pills along with the more highly publicized favorites of the young." (*The New York Times*); "Three coffins punctuate the entrance to 'Drug Scene,' the new mutimedia exhibit that has already broken all attendance records. The display, financed by a $65,000 grant from the New York State Narcotics Addiction Control Commission, is scheduled to run at least three months. The coffins—bronze, pine, and white—signify the utter democracy of death among all classes and ages. 'ONE out of every 80 New Yorkers is hooked on addictive drugs,' a bilingual legend reads. 'TWO addicted babies will be born today in New York City.' 'THREE New Yorkers will die today from overdoses and diseases caused by drug abuse.'" (*The Village Voice*); "There are also young men walking around wearing big buttons that say: 'Ask Me.' Perhaps you'll ask one of them: 'How come you know so much about methadone?' The answer is apt to be: 'I took mine this morning.'" (*New York Post*).

254,000 persons came to see "Drug Scene" between February 22 and June 13, 1971, breaking the record for any previous special exhibition. Also that was larger than any preceding year's attendance.

Concomitant to "Drug Scene" and contrasting markedly to it, was the special exhibition "How Green Was My City," which consisted of a selection of charming 19th century paintings and prints of the city at a more gracious period. Together with these were photographs taken of the exact scenes contemporaneously. Touching in its own way upon the problems of ecology and city planning—or the lack of it—this exhibition combined the pleasure of viewing fine items from the Museum's

print and painting collection with provoking statements about the present. The design of the show with park benches and ivy, etc. added a particular appeal.

The President's Council increased to 101 members by January of 1972. This body of outstanding citizens proved very important in assisting in successful fund raising, in formulating plans for the Museum's future, and in making the institution a vital member of the cultural family of the city. The Council established a special award to be given annually in recognition of outstanding service by a New Yorker to the city. It is known as the $24 Award, symbolic of the original purchase price of the Island of Manhattan from the Indians for the equivalent of $24 in goods. The first recipient, at a gala dinner at the Museum on November 1, 1971, was Mrs. W. Vincent Astor for her "generous and indefatigable service to philanthropy and civic affairs and her strong commitment to social welfare."

In January 1972 the Museum celebrated the 40th anniversary of the opening of the Fifth Avenue building with a party for members. One feature that represented quite an innovation was the invitation to guests to bring in objects that they wanted to discuss with the appropriate curator. This not only created quite a bit of interest but also resulted in offers of a surprising number of gifts.

With a more stringent policy of acceptance, there were fewer gifts accepted during the last few years than previously, but two outstanding collections were received: first, a gift from the Hamilton family of portraits, furniture, etc. associated with Alexander Hamilton and his wife; and second, through the bequest of Mrs. Giles Whiting, a superb selection of early furniture and decorative arts objects which will shortly be exhibited in a special room in her memory.

The spring of 1972 saw the installation of CITYRAMA, one of the most unusual exhibitions ever put on by the Museum: the visitor is exposed to the history of the city from Verazzano's discovery of the bay in 1524 to the completion of the World Trade Center in 1972—all this in 17 minutes. During this narrated presentation 400 images comprising dates, maps, data and pictures flash on multiple screens, while at appro-

priate times spotlights illuminate pertinent historical three-dimensional objects from the Museum's collections. The complex installation was made possible by a grant from Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Dana, Jr. One indication of this exhibition's success is evidenced by the Museum's over-all attendance which reached a new record of 439,344 visitors for the year ending June 30, 1972.

Speaking of this exhibition, the Director, Joseph Veach Noble, said: "I look upon CITYRAMA as a logical development in museology. We are combining the real objects of a museum's collection with didactic facts and dates in a multi-media form to communicate with today's visually oriented audiences. By utilizing modern technology we have created a sort of giant teaching machine in which the visitor is completely immersed in the learning process."

CITYRAMA, however, serves a purpose far beyond the usual special exhibition. In addition to its innate excitement and teaching role, it provides an orientation to the whole complex history of the city. Paralleling this, the use of real three-dimensional objects affords the visitor a broad-based introduction to the Museum's whole collection. There is significance, too, in the fact that the story is basically structured around the migration of many different groups to the city and the resulting integration with the total population—not just dates, battles and events. For example, the narration points out that in the year 1703 with a population of only 4,436 there were already eighteen different languages being spoken in the city.

Mr. Noble, who conceived, wrote and narrated CITYRAMA, is fond of evoking the Colossus of Rhodes when discussing the ideal history museum as having one foot in the present and one foot in the past. CITYRAMA with its modern interpretation and pragmatic function well illustrates this philosophy.

In a similar way, other special exhibitions of the recent past such as "Drug Scene" and "How Green Was My City" had a significance that went far beyond the portrayal of past history. Rather, in their approach and emphasis they brought a new meaning to the present thus expanding the Museum's role to be "More Than a Mirror to the Past."

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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Blaine, James G.	1935–41
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Brown, Henry Collins	1923–25
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Burke, John S.	1935–41
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Chorley, Kenneth	1943–62
Clarkson, Robert L.	1962–63, 1967–70
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Hoppin, Frederic G.	1946–68
Hoving, Walter	1961
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Kountze, de Lancey	1930–46

Krout, John A.	1948–62
Lawrance, Mrs. Charles Lanier	1953–62
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Lord, Walter	1964–72
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Murphy, Grayson M-P.	1950–
Nickerson, Hoffman	1937–38
Nicoll, Courtlandt	1935–38
O'Brien, Kenneth	1926–35
Oenslager, Donald M.	1965–
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Paine, Peter S.	1950–66
Palmer, Miss Jean T.	1959–70
Parsons, William Barclay	1929–32
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Patterson, Jere	1962–71
Pierrepont, John	1972–
Pell, Theodore Roosevelt	1930–36
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Platt, Geoffrey	1962–
Prentiss, Marshall	1943–52
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Rice, Alexander Hamilton	1944–56
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Robinson, Beverley R.	1937–51
Robinson, Edward	1926–31
Roosevelt, George Emlen	1938–40
Roosevelt, Julian K.	1965–
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Rossbach, Richard M.	1962–
Sachs, Arthur	1928–33
Schaefer, Bernhard K.	1955–62
Schermerhorn, A. Coster	1925–49
Sherwood, Howard C.	1942–57
Shubert, John	1956–62
Sloane, John	1943–71
Sparkman, Drake H.	1948–51, 1953–64
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Stewart, William A. W., Jr.	1950–66
Stewart, William Rhinelander	1923–25
Stickney, Albert	1929
Stokes, I. N. Phelps	1926
Stout, Andrew V.	1937–51
Straus, Ralph I.	1936–44
Swartwout, Richard H.	1925–28
Taft, Henry W.	1923–25
Taft, Walbridge S.	1925–34
Taylor, Francis Henry	1940–43
Taylor, Henry R.	1923–25
Tinker, Edward Larocque	1938–68
Traphagen, John C.	1939–53
Van Pelt, John V.	1926–39
von Hemert, A. Philippe	1964–
Voorhis, John R.	1923–26
Wall, Mrs. Albert Carey	1953–72
Weissberger, L. Arnold	1967–
Wilmerding, Lucius	1934–38
Winlock, Herbert Eustis	1932–40
Winthrop, Henry Rogers	1943–47
Wood, Dudley P. K.	1957–63
Worcester, Dean K.	1953
Zabriskie, George A.	1923–26

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A MIRROR TO THE PAST
1923
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